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Message Text

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ACTION PM-04

INFO OCT-01 ARA-06 ISO-00 SS-15 NSC-05 CIAE-00 INR-07

NSAE-00 MC-02 AID-05 EB-07 COME-00 H-02 /054 W
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R 272150Z FEB 76
FM AMEMBASSY PANAMA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6884
INFO USCINCSO
SECDEF WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L PANAMA 1453

JOINT EMBASSY/USMILGP MESSAGE
SECDEF FOR DSAA-ISA AND JCS/J-5

EO 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, PN
SUBJECT: FY-77 MILITARY SECURITY ASSISTANCE - AMBASSADOR'S OVERVIEW

REF: A) JOINT STATE/DEFENSE MESSAGE STATE 36160
B) 75 PANAMA 7829
C) PANAMA 1296

THIS MESSAGE RESPONDS TO THE REQUIREMENT OF PARA 6 REF A FOR AN OVERALL ASSESSMENT BY THE AMBASSADOR, WHICH IS PROVIDED AS FOLLOWS:

1. IN MY JUDGEMENT, THE NEED FOR UNITED STATES MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO PANAMA IN THE FORM OF GRANT MATERIALS AND TRAINING AND FMS CREDITS IS UNQUESTIONABLE. THE PANAMANIAN NATIONAL GUARD IS SEEKING TO BUILD A VIABLE MILITARY FORCE FROM AN ESSENTIALLY POLICE AND CONSTABULARY ORGANIZATION. ITS REQUIREMENTS FOR ADDITIONAL TRAINING AND EQUIPMENT ARE EVIDENT--AND CONSIDERABLE. PANAMA HAS SHOWN ITS WILLINGNESS TO CONTRIBUTE TO THIS EFFORT BY CASH PURCHASE OR COMMERCIAL CREDITS, BUT STILL NEEDS ALL THE HELP IT CAN GET ON GRANT OR CONCESSIONAL TERMS. IT CAN AND WILL PRODUCTIVELY USE AS MUCH AS WE CAN PROVIDE AND MORE. FOR REASONS DISCUSSED IN REFERENCES B & C, IT IS IN THE UNITED STATES NATIONAL INTEREST TO SUPPORT THIS DEVELOPMENT. WE MUST ENSURE, INSOFAR AS WE CAN, THAT WE REMAIN THE SOLE OR PRINCIPAL
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SUPPLIER OF THE NATIONAL GUARD, AND THAT IT REMAIN FAVORABLY DIS-

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POSED TOWARD CLOSE COOPERATION WITH US. UNITED STATES MILITARY
ASSISTANCE IS NOT THE ONLY CONDITION TO ACHIEVE THESE LATTER TWO
POLICY OBJECTIVES, BUT IT IS CERTAINLY A NECESSARY ONE.

2. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF OUR ASSISTANCE TO PANAMA TO DATE IS HIGH.
WITHIN ITS EXISTING LIMITS, THE NATIONAL GUARD IS AN EFFICIENT
FORCE AND OWES MUCH OF THIS EFFICIENCY TO OUR TRAINING AND SUPPORT.
IT IS ALSO FAVORABLY DISPOSED TOWARD COOPERATION WITH US, SO LONG
AS WE CONSIDER IT AN EQUAL PARTNER AND NOT AS A SUBORDINATE ADJUNCT
TO OUR OWN FORCES. I BELIEVE THE PROSPECTIVE EFFECTIVENESS OF
THE ASSISTANCE PROPOSED FOR FY-77 IS EQUALLY GREAT. AS DISCUSSED
IN REFERENCE B, THE NATIONAL GUARD IS EAGER FOR OUR SUPPORT, AND
VIEWS OUR WILLINGNESS AND ABILITY TO PROVIDE IT AS AN ACID TEST
OF OUR TRUE INTENTIONS OF CONTINUING TO DEVELOP A CLOSE AND EQUAL
PARTNERSHIP.

3. AS DISCUSSED IN DETAIL IN REFERENCE C, OUR CURRENT GRANT AND
CREDIT ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS HERE ARE WELL-INTEGRATED AND MUTUALLY
SUPPORTIVE, AND ALSO ACCORD WELL WITH WHAT PANAMA HAS DONE WITH ITS
OWN RESOURCES. THE NATIONAL GUARD IS INCREASINGLY RECEPTIVE TO
JOINT PLANNING WITH THE USMILGROUP PANAMA, WHICH AUGURS WELL FOR
CONTINUATION OF A WELL-INTEGRATED PROGRAM AND EFFICIENT UTILIZATION
OF ALL FORMS OF AVAILABLE ASSISTANCE IN FY-77 AND FUTURE YEARS.

4. THIRD-COUNTRY MILITARY ASSISTANCE IS NOT A MAJOR FACTOR IN PANAMA;
IT CONSISTS MAINLY OF LIMITED TRAINING PROVIDED BY SOME OF HER
LATIN NEIGHBORS. I SCARCELY NEED TO REPEAT THAT THIS IS, FROM
OUR POINT OF VIEW, THE MOST DESIRABLE SITUATION AND ONE WHICH
WE SHOULD STRIVE THROUGH OUR
OWN ASSISTANCE PROGRAM TO PERPETUATE.

5. THE ECONOMIC ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE TO PANAMA FROM UNITED STATES,
THIRD COUNTRY OR INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONAL SOURCES HAS NO DIRECT
IMPACT ON THE CURRENT STATUS OR EXPANSION PLANS OF THE NATIONAL GUARD.

WE SEE NO EVIDENCE THAT PANAMA IS EITHER UTILIZING SUCH ASSISTANCE
IN A MILITARY-RELATED WAY, OR IS USING IT TO SUBSTITUTE FOR DOMESTIC
RESOURCES WHICH ARE THEN DIVERTED FROM DEVELOPMENT TO MILITARY
ENDS. IN FACT, THE REVERSE IS ACTUALLY TRUE. ONE OF THE MAJOR
SUBSIDIARY ROLES OF THE NATIONAL GUARD IS TO SUPPORT WITH MILITARY
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MANPOWER AND TRANSPORT ASSETS MANY PROJECTS AND PROGRAMS FOR NATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT, BOTH INDIGENEOUSLY-AND EXTERNALLY-FINANCED, PART-
ICULARLY IN REMOTE AREAS OF THE COUNTRY. WE REGARD THIS AS
HEALTHY, AND FEEL IT SHOULD BE ENCOURAGED TO THE MAXIMUM EXTENT
COMPATIBLE WITH THE NATIONAL GUARD'S CAPABILITIES AND REQUIREMENTS.

6. IN SUMMARY, I CONSIDER OUR PROPOSED MILITARY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
FOR FY-77 A MODEST AND SOUND ONE, IT WILL LEAD TO PRODUCTIVE USE

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OF THE RESOURCES TO BE MADE AVAILABLE AND WILL SUPPORT BROAD UNITED
STATES NATIONAL POLICY GOALS IN PANAMA.

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